



CA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
STATE  
SPECIAL SCHOOLS

# Braille Bites

## California School for the Blind

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### Superintendent's message

By: Sharon Sacks

As I reviewed Braille Bites for publication, it is quite evident that our students are involved in a variety of fun and exciting activities. All **CSB** students are invited to participate in school dances, and special dorm activities. A group of new students experienced the sights, sounds, and smells of the elephant seals at Ano Nuevo. Our art program has expanded its learning options and introduced students to knitting. Our apartment living students are developing their culinary skills by preparing food favorites, and expanding their repertoire with foods from other cultures. A Braille Bites edition would not be complete without a student article. In this edition one of our students has created a CSB Rap to express his thoughts about school.

Throughout the Fall our staff, students, and families have

provided feedback as **CSB** revised its Mission Statement, and developed a Vision Statement, as well as a list of core values. We are proud of this accomplishment. When you are on campus, please notice this document posted in classrooms, dorms, and in public areas. In addition, **CSB's** leadership team and CAC met to develop a school action plan that will be shared in our Spring edition of Braille Bites.

Finally, our winter edition provides an update on the Unified English Braille transition, and information regarding an important survey for families of **CSB** students. This project is being sponsored by the Council of Schools for the Blind. Please consider completing the survey.

## CSB's revised Mission, Vision and Core Values

Every few years it is important for a school community to review its mission. Last Fall **CSB's** staff, students, families, and community reviewed the school's existing mission, and framed a revised version. These statements represent our beliefs and provide us with a clear direction for the future. **CSB's** Mission, Vision, & Core Values are included in this article for your review and comment. In the next few months, **CSB** staff and Community Advisory members will develop an action plan for the next two years that will establish goals, activities, and measureable outcomes to ensure a secure future for **CSB**.

### Mission Statement

The **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind provides intensive, disability-specific educational services to students who have primary learning needs related to their visual impairment. The school serves as a statewide resource to provide expertise to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and families in evidenced-based assessment, specialized curriculum, cutting-edge research and technology, and innovative models of instruction that prepare students for adult life.

### Vision

In partnership with Local Education Agencies (LEAs), families, students, and community constituents, the **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind strives to create an atmosphere where high expectations, leadership, thoughtful decision-making, and mutual respect between staff and students is valued to ensure positive outcomes for academic and life skills success in a technologically-advanced society.

### Core Values

The **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind community believes:

- All students with visual impairments or those who are deafblind need to be given the skills necessary to reach their highest potential academically and socially whether through high school graduation or through the acquisition of functional life skills.
- Students need to be exposed to and participate in a wide range of experiential learning opportunities to maximize the potential for academic competence and independence.
- Respect and equity for all individuals in on-campus and in outreach programs supports an atmosphere of empowerment, advocacy, and life-long learning.
- Students deserve an educational environment that maintains high expectations for student performance at all times.
- Students deserve on-going opportunities to prepare for adult life through specialized instruction in vocational educational education and training, independent living skills, assistive technology, and social skills.
- Students deserve highly trained and certified professionals who are life-long learners and seek to promote excellence and innovation in every aspect of their work.

## What's Cooking at CSB's Apartment Living Program

Each week students in the Apartment Living Program at CSB are required to submit a shopping list and a recipe for a cooking lesson. Students are supported by staff who might suggest changes or additions to the shopping list, and work with students to modify cooking techniques such as measuring, food preparation and clean up. Students prepare family recipes, and find recipes online by looking at various websites. Recently Tierra, an Apartment Living Program student prepared a delicious Macaroni and Cheese dish. She used a recipe she found on the website allrecipes.com. Tierra says she will definitely make the recipe again, and that what she liked most about the dish was the texture that adding the bread crumbs created. The website allrecipess.com has an interesting feature that provides menu suggestions based on ingredients you have in your refrigerator or cupboards. Tierra reports that for her next cooking challenge she wants to try making vegetarian lasagna, and homemade pizza rolls.

### Tierra's Mac and Cheese (from allrecipes.com)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 (8 ounce) package elbow macaroni
- 1 (8 ounce) package shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 (12 Ounce) container small cured cottage cheese
- 1 (8 ounce) container sour cream
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup dry bread crumbs
- ¼ cup butter, melted



#### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil, add pasta and cook until done; drain.
2. In a 9x13 inch baking dish, stir together macaroni, shredded cheddar cheese, cottage cheese, sour cream, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper. In a small bowl, mix together bread crumbs and melted butter. Sprinkle topping over macaroni mixture.
3. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, or until top is golden.

## A trip to Menlo park

By: Erica Hogle

On December 4<sup>th</sup> a group of students and staff went down to Menlo Park, CA to visit some kindergarten classrooms. **CSB** students discussed and demonstrated the different ways people who are blind or visually impaired play games, read, do math, and get around. Natalie C. started off by reading the book, *The Hungry Caterpillar*, out loud to the kindergarteners. After the story, the students loved feeling the book and learning about braille. Then, the kindergarten students got to go to different stations that were set up around the classroom. At one station, Athena S. and Jayna N. showed students the different games they like to play. At another station, Dolores was with Josselin C. and Manny O.



who demonstrated how to use a braille. They gave out students' names in braille and helped them braille some words of their own. Erica Hogle was with Billy L. who informed students about the white cane and showed them how he uses his different senses (and his cane) to get around. Then the students got a chance to touch the canes and move

some of them around the room. Mocha showed students how someone navigates their environment using a guide dog. Delena Cook also taught students about using the abacus. The students were fascinated at every station!

The **CSB** students worked hard and did this for a total of three full kindergarten classes!! Afterwards, they had lunch with one of the classrooms and answered some more questions the students had. All of the teachers at Menlo Park were very thankful and said that our students did and wonderful job! They want to make sure this event happens again next year.

## Business Services Focus on: Administration

By: Melanie Allen

Business Services at the California School for the Blind encompasses many areas: custodial, security, maintenance and administrative functions. This article focuses on the administrative functions of Business Services.

Marcus Graves is the school's administrative receptionist. He sits at the front desk in the Administration Building lobby and greets guest, students and staff who enter the building. He also answers calls and directs them to the appropriate person. Marcus directs people around the campus and is responsible for receiving the daily mail from the postal person. He mentors students who wish to become a receptionist and teaches them how to answer phones, greet people, and professional development.



Back Row: Loretta Cook and Kimberly Garcia  
Front Row: Marcus Graves and Marino Gaoiran

Loretta Cook is our Office Technician who serves as the liaison to the California School for the Deaf, Fremont (CSDF) main accounting office. Loretta processes and logs the requests for funds for school activities, class projects and travel. She also distributes all checks, processes invoices and fund requests as well as endowment. Loretta types the reports from Security and distributes them to administrators at **CSB** and CSDF. Loretta also participates on inventory teams here at **CSB** and other sites in our division. She can also be seen answering phones, greeting people and providing campus directions.

Marino Gaoiran is now working in our warehouse. He is responsible for receiving all orders for **CSB** and maintaining the inventory of the items in the warehouse. Marino is part of the division inventory team and participates in all inventories at each site. He works closely with his supervisor, Sharon Bobbitt, on property control, inventory and tracking of equipment and property of **CSB**. Marino works closely with vendors and other departments to ensure the items requested and ordered are received in good condition and meet the expectation of the purchaser.

Kimberly Garcia is our Office Technician for Procurement. She is responsible for typing all purchase orders (POs) and ensuring all Department of General Services (DGS) and California Department of Education (CDE) guidelines are in order before processing the POs and forwarding them for final approval. Kimberly processes POs for both CSB and Diagnostic Center Northern California (DCN). She is responsible for compiling Recycle, Small/Micro Business (SB/MB) and Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE) reports for both sites. She inputs expenditure reports for **CSB** and DCN into budget logs for the Business Manager. Kimberly serves as the Business Services timekeeper.

**Thank you!**



Classroom 54-8 would like to thank the families, staff and students for supporting the food and animal drives for Tri City Food Bank and Fremont Animal Shelter.

Your generosity and thoughtfulness made the drives a great success.

Thank you,

Amanda, Jenna,  
Jomar and Tommy

Don't forget to RSVP to the

**OPEN HOUSE**

on March 25

9-2

For more info or to RSVP send email to:

[jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov](mailto:jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov)

## 2015 Winter Ball

By: Nadrina Weseman

We have held two dances this winter. The first dance was our annual formal dinner/dance. The second dance was our informal sweetheart dance.

On Wednesday, January 21 the residential program held their annual Winter Ball. Our dining hall was transformed into a winter wonderland. Blue and white snowflakes hung from the ceiling and the windows. Tables were decorated with white table cloths, crystal drinking glasses and beautiful blue metallic confetti in the shape of snowflakes. Branches that were painted white and silver were placed in crystal vases illuminated by tea lights. Approximately 50 students dressed in their finest clothing attended the formal affair. The students enjoyed a delicious dinner of Chicken Parmesan or Tilapia baked in a lemon butter sauce. After dinner the students danced the night away to their favorite songs played by our DJ Paul Dominguez.



Tuesday, February 17 was the date for our Sweetheart dance. The setting for this informal dance was the theater. Although the dance was held after Valentine's Day we still decorated the theater with a multitude of hearts. Our theme for this dance was the "50's Soda Shop". Students dressed in jeans, collared shirts with the sleeves rolled and slicked back hair. Prior to the dance the students were treated to a special meal of hamburgers and fries. At the dance malt shakes and cookies were served. As usual the students danced until they could dance no more.



# SCHOOL RAP

Education is mine because I'm trying to get paid.

I just got an A so my day is going great.

Up early in the morning, so I won't be late.

Told my Dad, start the car and watch us scrape down the street to my school.

Don't give me a break, because all y'all teachers be trying to teach, because  
all y'all teachers be trying to teach.

Got my hand on my collar, crease on my pants.

Don't mind me I'm just doing my dance. School, school is cool.

You always go- don't be no fool!

It helps you learn to read and write.

So do your homework every night!

Math, Science, Language Arts, you already know I use my smarts.

My name is Donte and I like to study. Michael, Christian, Jacob, my buddies.

School is a place you don't play no games.

So when you grow up there's no one to blame.

You can do things and buy your own Braille game.

**BY: DONTÉ M.**

## Tech Update

By: Stephanie Herlich

This week (2/17/15) all students enrolled in Tech Class will be receiving a technology folder. This folder should come home with your student at least once a week. Please look through this folder with your son/daughter. You will find step by step instructions (in print and braille) for many of the things students have been learning in Tech Class. New instructions will be added to the folder throughout the year. Many student folders also contain a parent signature page. Part of the students' technology homework is to discuss with a parent or guardian what was accomplished or learned in technology during the week. As always, please feel free to contact the Assistive Technology Specialists if you have any questions.

## Newell Perry Honored

By: Sharon Sacks

Last October Dr. Newell Perry was inducted into the APH Hall of fame for leaders & Legends. This honor was bestowed to Dr. Perry for his stellar contributions to the blindness community. Dr. Perry was a teacher at the **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind. He instilled strong advocacy and leadership values in his students. He encouraged his students to strive for high academic standards, pursue higher education, and secure well-paying jobs in the community. Dr. Perry's photograph hangs in **CSB**'s library along with his award. The award is a replica of Dr. Perry's face in a bah relief (raised bronze sculpture) format. **CSB** is proud of Dr. Perry's legacy and his advocacy efforts.



## Community Event

By: Clara VeraCruz

The Residential students in Westridge dorm and a couple of students from Southridge dorm had a blast at an event presentation held at Fremont Public Library by Felidae Conservation Fund on Monday, February 9, 2015.

Felidae Conservation Fund is a nonprofit, San Francisco based organization, globally working to advance the conservation of wild cats, pumas and their habitats around the world. This organization has an engaging/inspiring research presentation here at the Fremont main public library. The focus of the presentation was on Mountain Lions, their ecosystems and the current study underway to protect them as endangered species. Our students listened and participated with very engaging questions. It was indeed a special night and our staff were very proud of our student's performance and conduct overall.



## Braille at CSB

By: Ann Gelles

Louis Braille wanted to read more than anything else. So he set about working on a code that blind people could use easily. He worked on a system for reading for many years. After learning about Captain Barbier's Nightwriting system, Louis finally developed a six dot code at the age of 15. He was thrilled about his new dot system. He wanted to share it with blind people all over the world. He would be excited to know that 90% of blind people who are employed know Braille today.

Braille fit under a blind person's fingers. Blind people are able to read Braille faster than the raised letters Louis Braille was forced to learn. This groundbreaking advancement allowed blind people to be able to communicate with self and others—read and write independently—at long last because of this strong-willed man. Today, thanks to Louis Braille's inspiration, Braille is used

everywhere.

We honor Louis Braille's legacy here at **CSB**. Between 35 to 40 **CSB** students ranging in age from 7-21 are enrolled in formal Braille classes throughout the year. Braille students attend classes from 3-5 sessions per week. The goal of the Braille program is to learn to read and write 95-100% of the Braille signs, commonly used punctuation marks and the rules that govern Braille. Students are encouraged and inspired to reach their highest potential in a individual program of study. Some students learn the Braille code in a year's time while others may take three or four years to learn it.

My aim is to make learning Braille fun. Students often use Braille Literacy Touch Graphics (SAL) to practice their tracking or letter recognition skills. Most **CSB** Braille students learn to edit documents on a Braille Note, a computer note taking device. All Braille students practice new Braille contractions by reading lively, customized stories scaled at increasing difficulty using only the Braille contractions they've already learned to foster confidence and by completing comprehension tests on the Braille Note. Many students compete with themselves or even challenge other classmates in a friendly manner with the IEP Reading Races. Students work on reading with expression while practicing for their portfolio performances or reading recitals.

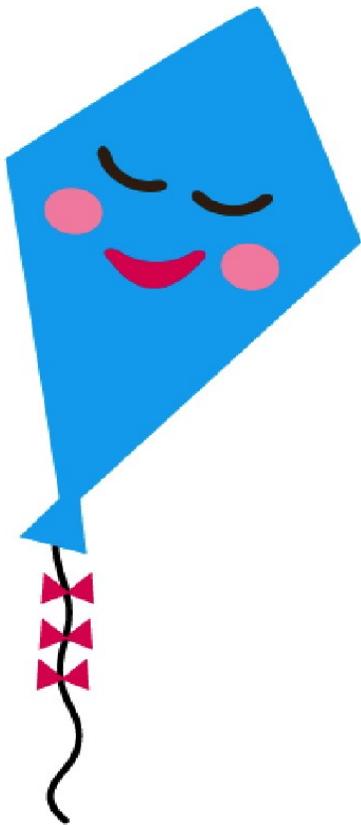
Competitions and games carefully designed to include humor, playful interaction and other 'fun' components are offered school-wide throughout the school year for Braille-capable **CSB** students to provide opportunities for continuing to hone their skills. This year, **CSB** offers the 'Hall of Fame Braille Test,' the '**CSB** Reader's Hall of Fame One,' and the 'Reader's Hall of Fame Two,' which is currently in progress. Sixteen Braille students took trophies home last October from various competitions. Almost 50 Braille students are eagerly studying to be this year's Braille Bee champion. A few students will be traveling to Santa Clara to participate in the Northern California Regional Braille Challenge at the end of February.

The Braille code used in the USA is undergoing changes to make it similar to Braille code used for international English. This change will be implemented in 2016. Students will begin learning the Unified English Braille Code after the Braille Bee, scheduled for late February, 2015. In short, we will be saying good-bye to contractions for words and word fragments such as "o'clock," "Ally" and "ation," "to," "into," and "by," "com," "dd," and "ble." I will write more about UEB in my next Braille Bites update.

## Beanies!

By: Minda Tayam

You may have seen students sporting the beanies (knitted hats) they've made in ECC class this winter. The art program has been offering an ECC class in learning how to knit with a circular knitting loom. The loom is designed with tactile pegs that aid in creating and tracking stitches. Students wrap yarn around the pegs and cast off using a small hooking tool. As one student says, "It's addictive—once you start, it's hard to stop."



## Summer Soaring

at **CSB**

## Technology and Sports Camp

For more information or to request and application

please contact

James Rudder at

[jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov](mailto:jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov)

or

510-794-3800 x258

## Into the Wild: CSB's Año Nuevo Adventure

By: Shelby Zimmerman

On Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 15 **C**alifornia **S**chool **B**lind (**CSB**) students and six **CSB** staff drove to Pescadero, CA for the annual visit to Año Nuevo State Park. Each year, the school invites students who have not previously visited Año Nuevo on an all-day adventure to the coast, where students experience a close up encounter with elephant seals during their peak breeding season.

At the reserve, students embarked on a three mile guided hike to the beach and back, accompanied by trained Año Nuevo docents. Students skillfully traversed the path, putting their mobility skills to use on the uneven dirt trail and sandy beach. Throughout the walk, docents shared information about the California coast, history of the area, and facts about the local wildlife, while allowing students to explore vegetation, ship remnants from 1913, and seabird feathers. Near the beach, students felt molted fur from an elephant seal and explored skulls and pelts from wildlife and marine mammals. Guides also shared wonderful tactile demonstrations of the 20ft length of a male elephant seal, mayonnaise-like consistency of elephant seal breast milk, and avocado-like texture of a male elephant seal's chest shield. On the beach, students stood about 30ft from weaner (baby), female, and male elephant seals and could hear the loud burping-grunting sound of the males. Some students used their monocular telescope for an even closer view of the animals.

Students who were unable to hike the distance explored Año Nuevo via an Equal Access van to the boardwalk. These students were also close to elephant seals, and some benefited from zooming into photos of elephant seals captured by an iPad. Of the many engaging questions asked, students were most surprised to learn that elephant seals can hold their breath for up to 20 minutes under water.

After lunch and a quick trip to the gift shop, the vans loaded up to head back to school. Students and staff had an exhilarating day full of interesting facts and new vocabulary, with one student exclaiming, "Año Nuevo is our best trip ever!" Many thanks to accompanying **CSB** staff and Año Nuevo docents for making this unique experience for the students such a success.



# Celebrating Parent Empowerment

By: Alea Holman

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

You are the cornerstone of your children's development. Children and teenagers rely on their families for safety, security, comfort, and guidance. Therefore, your well-being directly influences your children's success. You have graciously entrusted the education and care of your children to the **CSB** staff. Yet, at all times, whether students are at school or at home, caregivers greatly influence children's beliefs and actions. You have instilled values in your children that stay with them no matter where they are. Though children are also greatly influenced by other sources, including peers and media, parents are the most enduring influence on children and teens.

Children observe how their caregivers walk through the world, respond to adversity, and advocate for themselves. As role models, the ways that you respond to your children give indications about how children should feel about themselves. Considering the priceless influence that you have, your sense of confidence and power in your parenting is paramount for students' success and happiness.

## **What is parent empowerment?**

Parent empowerment represents the rights of parents and caregivers to fully participate in their children's education, including making educational decisions and advocating for students' educational achievement.

## **Why is parent empowerment important?**

As parents and caregivers, you are the most important models for how students should participate in their education and advocate for themselves in life. Your presence and support is deeply meaningful to students and crucial for their success. They may not always show you or tell you, but children and teenagers need their caregivers to be interested in their school experiences.

## **What is **CSB** doing to support parent empowerment?**

Each psychologist at **CSB** is committed to supporting parents in order to best support our students. **CSB** psychologists welcome you to reach out and discuss your concerns about what happens at school and at home.

We are here to listen and offer support, and we can also suggest approaches to try when students seem to be struggling with emotional, social, or academic problems.

In addition to our regular availability, **CSB** will host an **Open House March 25<sup>th</sup>**. We would love to have strong parent participation. During the Open House, you will have the opportunity to connect and share stories with others who have similar experiences.

For next school year, we plan to offer workshops and activities tailored to families' interests and needs. Workshops will give caregivers the opportunity to discuss their current parenting challenges in a nurturing setting. We will focus on developmentally appropriate approaches to children's issues and, in particular, the new struggles that arise when children begin the challenging process of becoming young adults.

Below is a list of topics that are commonly discussed in parent meetings. **Please contact me regarding which topics you would most like to discuss in future meetings.** [aholman@csb-cde.ca.gov](mailto:aholman@csb-cde.ca.gov). *In your response to me, please let me know if you'd like to participate in a meeting in your hometown.*

In all, **CSB** wants to continue to cultivate a bridge of communication between families and staff so that the adults that serve our students are a strong and compassionate base from which students can flourish and thrive.

1. Understanding your child - what is age-appropriate?
2. Helping children who are struggling in school
3. Helping children adjust to vision loss
4. Negotiating supervision and independence
5. Supporting independent living skills
6. Managing risky behaviors
7. Managing anger/dealing with conflict and combative attitudes
8. Supporting identity development (including racial/ethnic, gender, sexual identities)
9. Adjusting parenting and discipline strategies as children grow
10. Negotiating rules and boundaries
11. Being an ally to your child at school and in the world
12. Communication with Teachers

## A Little Bit More About UEB

By: Alysa Chadow

I spoke of the elimination of 9 different contractions in my last article on UEB. As for the remaining ones, their use will make braille look very different from what we braille readers are used to.

Even the language associated with UEB has changed. Families of words are now known as group signs, and there are 3 of them-upper, middle, and lower. With very few exceptions, they can be used in the middle of words where they previously were not permitted.

Take “en” and “in.” They can now be used in words such as “prenatal” and “antinuclear.” Other group signs that can now show up in words such as “reduce” are-you guessed it-“ed” and “ing.” Now that “ble” and “dd” have been eliminated, “enable” just won’t be the same.

This is just the tip of the iceberg...look for more changes in future BB articles.

(AUTHOR’S NOTE: These changes are courtesy of The Hadley School for the Blind’s new course, “Transitioning to UEB.” It has six lessons with plenty of opportunities for practicing the changes.)

**\*\*Important survey for parents\*\***

Please consider completing this survey online.

The parent questionnaire can be found at the following link:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/specializedschoolsurvey>